



# ASLEF

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NOVEMBER 2014

## The banner bright, the symbol plain of human right and human gain **ASLEF activists take to the streets**



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**ASLEF** the train  
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## It seems we live in interesting times

**W**E ARE entering an interesting phase in our industry – and our futures – with parliaments north and south of the border making decisions that seem blatantly designed to ensure that any future Westminster government or devolved democracy at Holyrood is trapped with a flawed rail industry model that has demonstrably failed the taxpayer, and the travelling public, for the past two decades.

The decision in Scotland to let the franchise after the outcome of the recent independence debate – and despite a universal call for the decision to be delayed and due consideration given to what Scotland might do, with more powers, with its infrastructure in the future – beggars belief.

We also have a rushed decision on the future of the East Coast to come and the coalition government – with its new culture of direct awards – seems determined to ensure that public cash haemorrhages from the industry to a few vested interests for many years to come.

Franchising, as demonstrated by the West Coast debacle, is flawed but the Tories' new idea of short and long term awards with no competition is designed to protect their dogma and ensure that future governments are locked into the current system. That undermines democracy.

Closer to home, our thoughts are with all those drivers, railway workers and those from the emergency services affected by the recent spate of fatalities across the network. Let's hope it's a blip rather than a reflection of a longer term issue in society and, consequently, our industry.

On Saturday 18 October hundreds of you marched with the ASLEF contingent, and the rest of the trade union movement, in London demanding that Britain needs a pay rise. It can only be of benefit to the whole economy to treat all workers with dignity and reinvigorate the British economy by increasing the spending power of decent working families. I want to thank you for your support and solidarity and hope, this time, the politicians listen to what we say.

**Mick Whelan**, general secretary



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ABOUT **ASLEF**

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# Going Underground

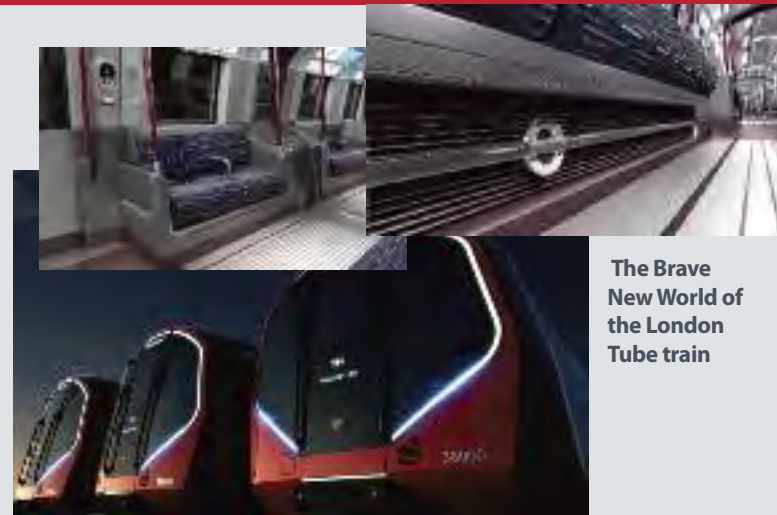
## FINN BRENNAN reports on TfL's much-vaunted invitation to tender for new Tube trains

With great fanfare, Transport for London held a press launch for a mock-up of a new train that will, eventually, operate on some of the capital's deep Tube lines – the Piccadilly, Bakerloo, Central and Waterloo & City.

Despite Boris Johnson's frequent announcements that he would only order 'driverless' trains, this one has a driver's cab – as

every knowledgeable industry expert knew that it would. The new stock could only become automatic when the entire line is resignalled and the whole fleet is replaced. Unattended train operation would only be feasible once PED doors were installed which would be a complex and hugely expensive project.

According to LUL's provisional programme this would be 'several years' after 2025. So, even with management's most optimistic forecasts, it would be the end of the next decade before so-called driverless trains could operate. And then, of course, there is the question of cost; the collapse of the contract with Bombardier to resignal the sub-surface left a big



The Brave New World of the London Tube train

hole in TfL's budget projections. People involved in the project believe the replacement signalling system will end up costing hundreds of millions of pounds more than was expected. So where, exactly, is the money going to come from for PED door enabling works as well as new

trains and signals?

Even the Mayor of London is busy backtracking; he now says the trains will not have 'old fashioned cabs'. Well, that is one thing we agree on! ASLEF will ensure they have comfortable modern cabs for our members to work in.



## 100 not out at Burston

ASLEF activists including District 5 Organiser Nigel Gibson, executive committee member Howard Kaye, and Les Muir, ex-King's Cross, joined

hundreds of others from the labour movement at the traditional late summer rally in Burston, near Diss, in Norfolk, to celebrate the longest strike in British history.

It began in 1914 when two teachers, Annie Higdon and her husband Tom, at the village school, were sacked for taking the side of the

farm labourers, and their children, and for standing up against the landed gentry and the despotic right-wing rector of the local parish church. Sixty-six of Burston school's 72 children walked out to join the Higdon's

### School's out for summer – ASLEF on the march

strike school, initially in a tent on the village green, which ran until 1939, when Tom died.

'This year was the 100th anniversary of the Burston strike,' said Nigel. 'It's an important landmark in the history of the labour movement, and a great day out, too.'

## TORIES HAVE LEARNED NOTHING – IT'S BUSINESS AS USUAL, SAYS MICK



ASLEF has condemned the Conservative-led coalition after the Department for Transport published a prior information notice setting out a rail franchising timetable from 2014.

Ten franchises have now been granted direct awards or interim contracts.

The DfT document restates the aims of rail franchising, one of which is to 'deliver value for passengers and taxpayer'. In addition, the PIN sets out details of 'market opportunities' offered by the process and details of how companies can 'get involved'.

Mick Whelan, ASLEF's general secretary, said: 'The publication of the new franchising timetable demonstrates the reality of where rail operations in the UK are, two years on from the West Coast franchise debacle. Despite reviews and reports from Mr Laidlaw and Mr Brown we have learned nothing. It's business as usual.'

'Ten TOCs now have the DfT over a barrel with these direct awards or limbo contracts offering nothing beyond the short term. There is no risk for them, no incentive to invest, and they can continue to cream off the profits from our public subsidy. This hardly represents value for money for passengers and taxpayers.'



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### QUOTE...

'Network Rail should put commercial pressure on companies to say, "If you don't live up to these standards, you're off the job." I know they haul in the CEOs of various contractors but, at some point, they will have to bite the bullet. They are paying these contractors large sums of money... they need to demand high standards.' – **Ian Prosser, chief inspector of railways, and director, railway safety, at the Office of Rail Regulation**

**...UNQUOTE**





The success of the East Coast (above) has changed the dynamic of the argument over public ownership, argues Ian Bell (above) in *The Herald*

## The terms of the rail debate have changed whatever Patrick thinks

The mood music over public ownership is changing and, to mix our metaphors, the tide is turning against the Tories. This is partly because of the obvious flaws in the franchising process; partly because of soaring fares which have put passengers off privatisation; partly because of all the money that leaks from the industry in the form of profits for the TOCs and FOCs; and partly because of the hard work of ASLEF, the RMT, the TSSA, Unite and the TUC.

In the light of the success in public ownership of the East Coast (see story below) Ian Bell, an award-winning

newspaper columnist who lives in Berwick-upon-Tweed, wrote in *The Herald*: 'Patrick McLoughlin told his party conference in Birmingham that the Labour alternative to a record of failure involved "state command" while allowing the unions to "call the shots". Even a £1 billion return for the exchequer is unacceptable, it seems, in the face of red tyranny.'

'It was a nice, lurid, conference fantasy which involved shunting the truth into a siding. Ed Miliband's Labour is not embracing renationalisation. As the leader explained to a disgruntled

National Policy Forum at the end of July, his pink wish is simply to allow public sector bodies to bid on equal terms against the privatisation pirates in the usual squalid auctions.

'It isn't much of a demand. The first gathering of the Berwick station soviet might have to wait. Prime Minister Miliband, with the reserved rights of the Railways Act 1993 (as amended) at his disposal, could renationalise at will as franchises lapsed. He would rather not. Instead, he hopes only to address the extraordinary fix that has prevented those "public bodies" from being in the game. Still, the unambiguous lesson of East Coast would be ignored under his government. But if transport infrastructure is essential to lives, environment and prosperity in Scotland, questions of beneficial ownership await an answer.'

Ian's thoughtful reflections on the state of Britain's railways appear below a no-nonsense headline which reveals just how much the terms of engagement have changed recently: Nationalise the Entire Railway Network.

## EAST COAST DELIVERS FOR TAXPAYERS

**Directly Operated Railways, which runs the East Coast main line from London King's Cross to Edinburgh Waverley, made a pre-tax operating profit of £225.3 million in 2013-14. That meant the public sector company could return £216.8 million to the Treasury. Proof, says Mick Whelan, that a publicly-run, publicly-accountable railway benefits not just passengers and workers but taxpayers, too. DOR has run East Coast since November 2009, when National Express handed back the keys, but the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government is determined to privatised the franchise before the next election.**

**500 CLUB:** J Urquhart, with number 16, won the October draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £350.

## Off the rails

**FEELGOOD FACTOR:** ASLEF's Annual Assembly of Delegates will be held in Southend from 12-15 May next year. Richard Godwin, in a timely piece in his column in the *Evening Standard*, writes: 'London's nearest beach is little more than an hour from my flat in Harringay. Overground to Barking and, before you know it, you're in Leigh-on-Sea with its 85p oysters and disoriented West Ham fans. We spent the day wandering up the coast, admiring the Canvey Island oil refinery, listening to the local rockabilly bands and watching the elderly bathers at Westcliff. Finally, we strolled into Southend-on-Sea: a far less pretentious Brighton, with far better rollercoasters. The Thames estuary is quite a gem, you know. Let's hope it stays that way.'



**ALISON MILLER**, a ScotRail driver and Women's Representative Committee member from Carlisle, played her part in winning the argument for the union in Scotland. She explained why England and Scotland are Better Together on their website. She said: 'I want to do what is best for Scotland's workers, best for our rail industry and best for our pensions in this referendum. I've worked on Scotland's railways for seven years and am an activist in ASLEF – the train drivers' union. My union is one of six, representing 130,000 workers all across Scotland, calling for a No vote. We believe the strength of our movement comes from working together to achieve change.'



**CLEMENT ATTLEE**, the Labour Prime Minister, is revered for leading the government which introduced the National Health Service and the pillars of our welfare state. He's also admired for the things he said such as: 'Charity is a cold, grey, loveless thing. If a rich man wants to help the poor, he should pay his taxes gladly, not dole out money at a whim.' James Bloodworth, editor of *Left Foot Forward*, agrees. 'There isn't much that is more nauseating than seeing a celebrity "philanthropist" who very publicly gives with one hand while in private ruthlessly seeking to minimise what they pay in tax with the other.'



**GAGGED:** Tash and Nicky McDonald joined a demo outside the *Doncaster Free Press* offices, wearing gags to symbolize the media silence on the deleterious effects of the proposed EU-US Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership. Katy Proctor wrote a piece about The Secret Deal Which Could Undermine Us All in the August edition of the *Journal* but *The Sun* and *Daily Mail* have been slow to follow our lead.

**TRAIN COMPANIES** have been accused of 'ripping off' passengers by tens of millions of pounds each year over compensation for late and cancelled trains. The privatised train operating companies snaffled £167 million from Network Rail, and the public purse, in 2013-14 for delays caused by track, signals and other infrastructure failures. But handed over less than £50 million to passengers, pocketing the rest. And Patrick McLoughlin wonders why people are disenchanted with privatisation...

# Standing solid leads to victory on Tube

## District 8 Organiser **FINN BRENNAN** reports on the Central line strike

**S**OLID strike action by ASLEF members on the Central line in London has led to an important victory for drivers across the combine. Our members and representatives had become increasingly frustrated with a management that seemed to believe they could ignore agreements with impunity and use case conferences to bully and threaten staff. New procedures like 'prompt dispatch' were introduced without consultation or agreement; requests from health and safety reps to investigate dangerous incidents were refused and drivers were threatened with warnings for minor errors and delays.

Despite raising these issues through the machinery of negotiation and repeated intervention by senior reps, management ignored our complaints. In fact, when our branches passed resolutions highlighting our concerns, the line general manager gave instructions that they be removed from notice boards.

They seemed to believe that if they ignored ASLEF, we would go away. They were wrong. Our reps and activists did an excellent job of keeping members informed of the issues and ensuring the union had solid support. The result was a 90.1% 'yes' vote to take strike action. Management failed to take the opportunity to resolve the dispute. Talks at ACAS ended when they withdrew assurances they had previously given, leaving us with no other option than to strike.

On Friday 22 August ASLEF members on the Central line showed they were not prepared to be treated this way any more. Not one single ASLEF member reported for work. Despite attempts to have a shuttle service at the extreme ends of the line with non-members, not a single train ran through the centre of town.

At last, senior management started to take the issues seriously and we returned to ACAS. Trains council reps Maeve Hanley and



**Finn Brennan and Mick Whelan (above) join Central line drivers on the picket line**

Gary Comfort worked hard, with EC member Terry Wilkinson and me, to make progress. But it was only when another strike was imminent, and with the direct intervention of the chief operating officer and the director of HR, that we were able to reach an agreement that we believed was acceptable.

We have no illusions that management on the Central line will suddenly change their spots. A series of monitoring meetings at director level will be held to monitor compliance and we will actively encourage members to

### QUOTE...

*'Rail fare rises have become almost as toxic to politicians as fuel tax increases.' –*

**Christian Wolmar in the Evening Standard**

**...UNQUOTE**

raise concerns via reps and the grievance procedure. We know that the only real guarantee of fair treatment at work is a strong trade union willing to take effective action when needed. ASLEF members on the Central line demonstrated that they insist on decent treatment. If management on the Central – or any other – line do not take heed, then they face further disputes.

## PRIVATE COMPANIES AT PUBLIC TROUGH

New figures from the Office of Rail Regulation reveal that the privatised rail network in Britain received £5.3 billion of public money – £227 million up on the previous year – in 2013-14.



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**Saturday 1 November, 10am  
TUC Congress House**

District 4 Organiser Nick Whitehead and EC vice-president Tosh McDonald laid a wreath on behalf of ASLEF at the ninth annual memorial service for Yorkshire miners at Rotherham Minster. The church was bedecked with union banners, including some from the county's remaining pits at Hatfield and Kellingley, with slogans such as 'from obscurity to respect'.



## Mick condemns US 'soft coup' against Correa

Mick Whelan has signed a statement issued by the Friends of Ecuador condemning the destabilisation of President Rafael Correa's democratically elected left-wing government and his Citizens' Revolution which has seen more public investment, higher wages for workers, and significant reductions in poverty.



## We will not bow to the masters nor pay rent to the lords

**V**oice and Vision is a double CD collection of radical songs compiled by the General Federation of Trade Unions' educational trust and Topic Records to celebrate the independent label's 75th year and the GFTU's 115th anniversary. The songs on this album, dedicated to the memory of Bob

Crow and Tony Benn, draw on hundreds of years of resistance, revolution and struggle. It begins with *The World Turned Upside Down*, a ballad about the Diggers and Levellers during the English Revolution, or Civil Wars, in the middle of the 17th century, and ends with a reggae song called *War*, a contemporary call to arms



against the neoliberal blitz on the people of the modern world.

'There are songs about organising workers, fighting back against class oppression, and real-life heroes such as Joe Hill as well as mythical figures such as Ned Ludd, Robin Hood and Captain Swing,' said Brian Denny of the RMT, who helped compile the collection, which includes performances by Ewan MacColl, Martin Carthy, Norma Waterson, Anne Briggs, Peggy Seeger and Paul Robeson, as well as young artists such as Fran Morter, Mat Boulter and Piers Haslam.

'Like Joe Hill, these songs will



**The old and new represented, respectively, by Martin Carthy (above) and Fran Morter (right) star on a new album of rebel songs**

never die,' said Brian. 'We hope this CD will keep these songs – and these artists – alive by inspiring another generation to take on the fight of our lives for freedom and democracy and people, not profits. Part of this fight is to ensure that the Old Etonians don't write our story out of the history books.'

*Voice and Vision* costs £10 from Topic Records. Call 01572 854321 or visit [www.topicrecords.co.uk](http://www.topicrecords.co.uk)

### WATCHDOG SLAMS TOCS

**Passenger Focus, the quango set up to represent passengers' interests in a privatised rail industry, says commuters are fed up with being ripped off by the privatised train companies. The watchdog's report *Rail Passengers Priorities for Improvements* – based on a survey of 3,500 commuters – identifies better value for money tickets as people's number one concern, followed by getting a seat on a train and more frequent services.**

## Walk on through the wind walk on through the rain

### ALAN MOSS reports from District 3's annual safety seminar in Liverpool

**I**T WAS very satisfying, and very refreshing, to see ASLEF reps engaging, being educated and making themselves better equipped to carry out their role. The GS snapped up our invitation to open the seminar, as he has each one since he has been in the big chair. Mick spoke about how important health and safety is to drivers, the challenges facing reps, and how we as a union face those challenges.

Alcie Monk, a human factors specialist at the RSSB, gave a presentation about a research project investigating compliance with permanent, temporary and emergency speed restrictions. More than 500 drivers responded to their survey and it's good to see the views of drivers being taken on board. There was a healthy debate about speed restrictions and how we see them.

Nick Chadwick, deputy head of drivers at Virgin Trains, talked about how he works with trade unions, which was very well received, and then gave a presentation on the just safety culture, a model used by



### The Liverpool team line-up looks healthy

Virgin Atlantic for a number of years.

New reps had the opportunity to network with seasoned reps over lunch, a case of us all helping each other, so there was some wisdom and knowledge passed on, and a few new dogs showing the old dogs some new tricks, about embracing technology and moving with the times.

ASLEF safety adviser Dave Bennett delivered a session on the ORR's guidance on occupational health and wellbeing. Dave and his head office colleague Mick Holder are always available to give advice on safety issues and are invaluable to reps.

Hilda Palmer, our friend and comrade from the Manchester Hazards Centre, urged us to help dispel the myths spread by the coalition government and their friends at the *Daily Mail*. I delivered a session on rights for reps and social media – using it to enhance your role and not fall foul of your employer's policies – and then DO Colin Smith brought the day to a close.

### QUOTE...

*'I remember as a child the days before central heating. When you woke up and your bedroom was freezing. You could see your breath in front of you and didn't want to get up. For many, today, the radiators are there but they can't afford to turn them on. That is not the Britain we believe in.'*

**Caroline Flint, Shadow Secretary of State for Energy and Labour MP for Don Valley**  
**...UNQUOTE**



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# Appy drivers are taking the tablets

**ASLEF Education project co-ordinator SHIRLEY HANDSLEY on a new initiative to help drivers plug the digital deficit**

**E**LEVEN members attended a digital deficit (tablet computer) course set up by ASLEF Education project worker Alan Reid and provided by Glasgow Clyde College, Cardonald, at the Thistle Hotel in Glasgow in September.

The session on Monday looked at safe ways of working with handheld devices and online fraud. In conjunction with First ScotRail, who through the Earn as You Learn scheme paid drivers attending eight hours for their time over two days, we looked at the legalities of social media and the dos and don'ts of



ScotRail drivers getting online in Glasgow

commenting on anything work-related.

The Tuesday session had members looking at rail fares and train times. We also worked with a programme First ScotRail provided with which we could access documents about our role as train drivers.

With railway technology, particularly in the driver grade, changing we feel it's important for members to have hands on experience with tablets and to get into the habit of opening apps and sourcing information which will be part of their job. Feedback suggests it is essential that ASLEF provides learning for members apprehensive about new technology.

Kevin Lindsay, District 2 Organiser, said: 'It is good to see the education project supporting

## QUOTE...

*'It is complete nonsense that the state railways of France, Germany and the Netherlands can all bid here in the UK but the successful British state rail operator is barred. The success of the East Coast main line, with high customer satisfaction scores and a £200 million return to the taxpayer, cannot be ignored.'* – **Lilian Greenwood, Labour MP for Nottingham South and Shadow Rail Minister**

**...UNQUOTE**

our members with real needs and topics relevant to their grade. We look forward with confidence to rolling this course out to our members throughout Scotland and hope that similar courses can be negotiated in England and Wales.'

## Safety on site – it's goodbye COSS, hello SWL

**MICK HOLDER of ASLEF's health and safety department reports on a new role on the railway**

The long-standing role of Controller of Site Safety on the permanent way is removed with the introduction of a Safe Work Leader in a revision of the railway rule book to come into force in December.

While this change will mainly affect those working on the track, ASLEF members should be aware as they will, in future, encounter an SWL instead of a COSS when, for instance, negotiating track in possession or delivering materials to a work site on the railway. SWLs will be recognisable as they will be wearing a distinctive cover on their hard hats.

The thinking behind the

change is that where there are several different teams working on a site, sometimes with different employers, and each with a COSS, there needs to be clarity about decisions taken to ensure safe working at the planning, execution and handover stages. The SWL will be involved in all three of these areas and new technology will be used to provide site plans and a new



Distinctive hard hat of the new Safe Work Leader

electronic working permit system (the ePermit).

The SWL will either be an employee of Network Rail or the principal contractor on the site. There will be three grades but only one SWL in charge of safety at any one site. There is a large training programme to ensure those taking on the role are competent and existing COSSs who wish to take on the new role will need to be re-trained.

## CONNING THE COMMUNITY

Mick Whelan says the coalition government's reliance on community transport to provide services for isolated communities is a 'confidence trick' and the Department for Transport's conviction that it addresses the needs of passengers in rural areas and isolated communities 'is delusional'.

'Even the Campaign for Transport's assessment that community transport can fill 10-15% of former supported transport provision is optimistic,' said Mick. 'It astonishes me that the department can give it the credence it does. Honest people pay taxes for the provision of essential services like transport. It is ludicrous that the DfT expects isolated communities to accept a do-it-yourself approach.'

Mick was reacting to the Passenger Transport in Isolated Communities report from the Transport Select Committee which calls for 'strategic leadership in driving joined-up policy making to allow people in isolated communities fully to participate in society'.

Mick said: 'Transport poverty is an issue we must face up to, and pay up for. We waste the talents of so many people simply because of where they live – and the report stresses that there are isolated communities in urban as well as rural areas. It is wrong to deny anyone access to adequate employment, education, training, and health care. It also makes it difficult to attract employment, like tourism, if there are poor public transport links.'



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# Louise shines light on match workers' strike



**Train drivers set off to Bow in the East End of London last month following the footsteps of**

**the women workers who took on, and beat, their unscrupulous bosses at the Bryant & May match factory in 1888. CHRIS PROCTOR reports on the proud and moving story they discovered**

IT IS easy to walk along the streets of any city without realising the wealth of history that lies all around us. Last month a group of ASLEF members gathered outside the gates of a building that now houses a gated development of upmarket flats in Fairfield Road in London's East End to re-live the dramatic events that took place here in 1888 when the structure was the match making factory of William Bryant and Francis May.

Most of the workers were women, many of Irish descent, who lived in poverty with entire families cramped into single rooms. They worked from 6.30am in the summer and 8am in the winter until 6pm in the most appalling conditions. They were bullied, sacked on a whim, fined (illegally) for the slightest misdemeanour, and generally treated with contempt.

## PHOSSY JAW

And, in the background, was the dark shadow of the industrial disease phosphorus necrosis that many of them contracted. It literally ate away the bones of the face. Before it killed, 'phossy jaw' led to foul-smelling decay, and brain damage, but the levels of poverty meant that often women who recognised the symptoms would cover their faces with scarves and continue to work. They needed to disguise the disease, because they were dismissed if they were found to have contracted it. But, without work, they would starve.

All this was reported by Annie Besant, a journalist and social activist, in *The Link* under the heading 'White Slavery in London'. Her article provided a catalyst for the strike. Management, anxious to divert bad publicity, instructed all their workers to sign a declaration that Besant's words were lies. They refused; and the bosses sacked one woman hoping this would intimidate the rest to put pen to paper. It was a desperate miscalculation. Instead of bowing down, 1,400 women marched out of the factory through the gates where the ASLEF members stood last month.

## LOWLY WOMEN

Louise Raw, the labour movement historian who led the walk, was anxious to point out that it was not social activists like Annie Besant or Fabians like George Bernard Shaw who drove the action. They offered support, but it was the match factory women themselves who organised, and won, the dispute.

At those gates in June 1888 the strikers elected representatives and formed a strike committee. The reps put their demands to management. They were shown the door, and told they would be replaced. Strike-breakers would be imported from Glasgow, management said. They would never give way to a horde of 'uneducated lowly women'.

Over the next two weeks they, and the country, discovered what working people can do when they are united and convinced of the justice of their cause. Mass picketing by the women prevented scab labour being introduced. They paraded through the East End publicising their conditions and gathering funds. They filled Fleet Street. They descended on the House of Commons and obtained an assurance of backing from the Glasgow MP, who said he would do all he could to prevent strike-breakers from his city coming to Bow. Police leave was cancelled and the dispute reached the pages of the national press.



Louise Raw (second left) between Nigel and Collette Gibson, with Les Muir, Nancy and Tim Waterhouse and Chris Nutty, led the walk to the factory gates (top); the water tower (above right) looks down today as it did over Annie Besant and the striking workers (centre) in 1888; Bryant & May, to court political favour, put up a statue of Gladstone near the factory, paid for with compulsory donations from their workers; since it was unveiled, it has been daubed with red paint, currently on his right hand

## UNSCRUPULOUS EXPLOITERS

All this industrial action frightened the company's shareholders. Often Liberals, fellow Quakers like Bryant and May, and clergymen, even their 20% dividends weren't worth their being exposed in the eyes of the world as unscrupulous, grasping exploiters. They put pressure on the factory owners and, two weeks later, the women's representatives were called back. They had won. They secured an end to workplace fines, the provision of a canteen where they could eat away from the poisonous phosphorus, an increase in wages and recognition for their trade union.

Being inside the factory grounds and seeing those same walls, foremen's houses and the water tower that the strikers saw

every day made the story of these brave and determined 19th century women all the more engrossing and real. Chris Nutty and Nigel Gibson, who organised the event, said: 'History came alive today. It came out of the dusty libraries and onto the streets. Hopefully, next time, we will encourage more of our colleagues along. It's not just a lesson. It's a pleasure.'

● *Striking a Light* by Louise Raw (Continuum, £16.99) is the definitive account of the match workers' strike. For more information visit [www.louiseraw.co.uk](http://www.louiseraw.co.uk) and if you know of an interesting place of working-class history please drop us a line



# In the belly of the BF beast



**MATT COLLINS** of Hope Not Hate reveals the unpalatable truth about an organisation that claims to put Britain First

**T**HE anti-racist and anti-fascist organisation Hope Not Hate, which ASLEF supports, has released a new report into the murky activities of the shadowy union flag-waving group Britain First. Because, in the space of a few months, Britain First has taken centre stage on the far-right of the British political spectrum.

Their beer-swilling supporters, dressed like Protestant paramilitaries in Northern Ireland, have invaded mosques in England and Scotland and staged Christian patrols in east London to try and draw out Muslim extremists for confrontation on the streets of the capital.

Their main infamy, however, was on social media. Hundreds of thousands of people were drawn to their Facebook page – not by their Muslim-baiting and drunken thuggery, but because Britain First managed to manipulate Facebook likes and stats by putting out material as diverse as being against dog fighting and feeling sorry about the death of comedian Robin Williams.

## HELP FOR HEROES

The nature of Facebook being what it is, few people who wound up 'liking' Britain First's page realised that the material they were sharing on social media was the work of race hate thugs.

When Hope Not Hate's report was published, the reaction from Britain First was startling. The group issued threats to any journalist who dared repeat its content. They threatened to attack and intimidate Hope Not Hate's staff members and 'track them down' to their homes.

What upset Britain First was that we exposed how their organisation works and what they really do. How Britain First posed as the forces charity Help for Heroes to con high street shoppers into making donations. How the group held paramilitary-style rallies with members dressed like paramilitaries in Northern Ireland during the Troubles and, of



Britain First trades under the slogan 'Taking our country back' but is an über-right organisation many of whose members are fond of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis and used to be in the British National Party, National Front, Combat 18 and Column 88

course, how Britain First is little more than a splinter group from the British National Party, led and funded by Jim Dowson, a notorious religious bigot from Northern Ireland, who previously funded the BNP.

Police in Southend, Essex, had to issue a notice to shoppers that Britain First, with its shiny lookalike patriotic badges, is not a forces charity, but is in fact a far-right political party that has tried on a number of occasions to cash in on the imagery of Britain's armed forces, and the sympathy people have for those who serve in them, to raise funds for its own activities.

## CAUSED OUTRAGE

They caused outrage during the European elections by using the name of Lee Rigby, the soldier murdered by two Muslim fundamentalists on a street in Woolwich, in their election slogans. Drummer Rigby's grieving mother described them as 'sick' but it was Hope Not Hate's reporting from right inside the organisation that drove them onto the defensive.

Since Hope Not Hate's report was published, Britain First's extremist founder and funder, Jim Dowson, has quit the group.

Dowson, a hardline Protestant, and former Orangeman, said he believed he was building a 'patriotic and Christian' street movement but conceded, in an interview with the *Daily Mirror*, that Britain First was no better than either the BNP or the English Defence League.

## DRUNKEN RACIST THUGS

We believe the group has now begun to disintegrate. Like the rest of the far-right in Britain, it cannot shake off an image that it is, in reality, little more than a gang of drunken, racist thugs. Made up almost exclusively of former BNP and EDL activists, that is not a surprise.

Britain First still manages to con people into handing over money, and to recruit people to its social media network. It's not always hard to see why; beheadings by Islamist extremists are a god send to people like them; the group cheerfully campaigns for a religious war between Christians and Muslims.

The group continues to dress its members up like soldiers and continues to try and con well-intentioned shoppers on the high street. But people are beginning to wake up to them and now reject their message.

# Then raise the scarlet standard high within its shade we'll live and die

**Trade union activists from across the United Kingdom gathered in London on 18 October to support the TUC's demand that Britain Needs a Pay Rise. KEITH RICHMOND reports from the front line of the people's protests against the Tories' Age of Austerity**

**T**HE march has long been an article of faith for those of us in the labour movement. For hundreds of years – from the Chartists and the Suffragettes to Jarrow and Aldermaston – men and women, and sometimes children, too, have marched to make their point. To protest. To make our voices heard. It's what we do. We marched against the wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq; against the National Front, the British National Party and the English Defence League; against slavery, apartheid and intolerance; against poverty and injustice and for democracy and equality and the vote; against the bankers who brought the world's financial system to the brink of collapse and the Conservative-led coalition's Age of Austerity and for a better, fairer world.

## THE HUNGRY FROM THE IRISH SEA

Sometimes it seems a waste of time and energy and shoe leather. As The Men They Couldn't Hang sang on the best known track of their album *Night of a Thousand Candles* 'And, oh, the iron masters, they always get their way.' Because the boss class – the rich and the powerful, those who own the land and the means of production – have always been reluctant to share it with the rest of us. It's been like that for a thousand years but, little by little, we have forced them, by withdrawing our labour, by organising, protesting and marching – and by cutting off a king's head in 1649 – to cede, however reluctantly, some of their power.

As The Men They Couldn't Hang put it, 'The union met in secret on the dark side of the hill, by the light of a thousand candles. Their pay had been cut, all the people come on out... It's no sin to fight to be free!'

And that's why 90,000 men, women and children – including a particularly plucky 10-year-old sporting green hair and a yellow RMT tee-shirt handing out anti-Sodexo leaflets near us – met at the TUC's marshalling yards along

the Thames Embankment on Saturday 18 October in support of the TUC's march and rally for Britain Needs a Pay Rise. Thousands more attended marches in Glasgow and Belfast, too.

'The massive turnout sends a strong message to Downing Street,' said Frances O'Grady, general secretary of the TUC.

'Getting money back into people's pockets is essential to securing a strong recovery. We need to avoid another debt-fueled spending boom of the sort that caused the financial crisis. Sustainable economic growth depends on fairer pay for ordinary workers and smaller bonuses for the super-rich. That's why we are campaigning for action to move our economy back in the right direction.'

## FOUR DEMANDS

The TUC has four demands:

- **A properly enforced minimum wage.** 'While the national minimum wage safeguards workers from extreme low pay it's no use if not properly enforced. The government should name and shame companies who aren't paying up. HMRC need more resources to help them identify more minimum wage cheats.'
- **Higher wages from employers who can afford to pay.** 'We know that in many low paid sectors employers could afford to pay more without making job losses. That's why we need new ways for unions and employers to work together to set higher wages, so workers and businesses both get a fair deal.'
- **Increased commitment to the living wage.** 'Companies that can well afford to pay the living wage are not doing so and contractors winning lucrative public sector contracts are continuing to pay poverty wages. Local authorities should make sure their staff, and those in their supply chains, get at least the living wage.'
- **A crackdown on excessive executive pay.** 'Pay at the top continues to rocket, fueling inequality and excessive financial risk taking. We need action to get top pay under control, starting with worker representation on pay committees and far more transparency about how much the super-rich are being paid.'

## WORSE OFF IN REAL TERMS

Mick Whelan, ASLEF's general secretary, and Simon Weller, our national organiser, had urged every branch to organise and more than 100 activists made the journey from all around the country to march behind our union banners.

'The average British worker is £40 a week worse off in real terms than five years ago. That's why we're marching today,' said Tosh McDonald, ASLEF's vice-president.



## QUOTE...

*'People are facing the biggest squeeze on their incomes since Victorian times. One in five people earn less than the living wage. It's time to say no to poverty pay.'* – Paul Kenny, general secretary of the GMB

**...UNQUOTE**

The rail unions were assigned zone 9, between the lifeboat pier and the landing stage, in the shadow of Somerset House. We lined up ahead of the RMT and the TSSA – in alphabetical order, said Tosh – just behind the entertainment unions, Equity and the Musicians' Union, in zone 7 and Prospect and the First Division Association in zone 8.

## EDUCATE, AGITATE, ORGANISE

It was very lively – especially with the FBU tender across the road blasting out hardcore punk and thrash metal at 11am – as activists greeted comrades from around the country. 'I wouldn't have missed this for the world,' said District 8 Organiser Finn Brennan, whose district provided a dozen stewards for the march, with a grin. It wasn't immediately clear if he was talking about the music or the march. District 3 Organiser Colin Smith smiled at the banner being carried past by TU Studies, Shrewsbury College, which urged us to Educate, Agitate, Organise. 'That,' said Colin, 'is what it's all about.'

Two police helicopters hovered overhead, the drone of their rotor blades drowned out by brass bands, bagpipes, and the metal machine music of the FBU. Police in light blue jackets with liaison officer logos smiled and chatted and mingled with stewards while snatch squads in baseball caps snarled on the sidelines, fingering their truncheons and tasers in case anyone was tempted to set off a flare or run a raid on Downing Street.

The march moved off at midday, with Unite at the head; followed by Unison, and the other health unions, the RCM and RCN; the GMB; USDAW; the NUT, NASUWT, and ATL; then the





And the banner man held the banner high, he was 10 feet tall and he touched the sky: ASLEF activists march along the Embankment on their way to the TUC rally in Hyde Park.

Photographs: Andrew Wiard and Mick Holder



PCS, CWU and UCATT; tens of thousands of activists walking proudly along the Embankment, talking and smiling with friends and colleagues, a dizzying array of colours and costumes, and complete cacophony, with many marching not to the sound of the guns, but to the sound of their Burundi-style drummers.

## BANNERS AND BALLOONS

Most of the media watched the spectacular parade of banners, balloons and blow-up figures (the NUT's five finger exercise in education got a gold star) from Hungerford Bridge as the marchers moved along the Embankment, up Northumberland Avenue, through Trafalgar Square, up Regent Street, and along Piccadilly to Hyde Park.

One spectator muttered, 'Pretty poor show from the anarchists, but then they can never get organised,' while an American tourist explained to her daughter, 'They are protesting about their government, darling, like those people we saw in Hong Kong.' The girl, wide-eyed, and all of seven years old, replied, 'Cool!' And it was.

So many people turned up that although the march set off, on time, from Hungerford Bridge it was an hour before the ASLEF contingent, followed by the FBU, Community, the NUS and the UCU, then the CLPs and social housing associations, passed underneath. And by the time those at the tail – from Left Unity, the Green Party, CND, Occupy, the Marxist Student Federation, Brent Stop the War and the London District Communist Party – passed the start mark those at the head of the march were camped out in Hyde Park.

## STOP BEING SCARED

Where Dave Prentis, general secretary of Unison, told them: 'Our members didn't cause this recession, our members didn't cause the failures of the banks.'

Len McCluskey, general secretary of Unite, said Labour has to offer people a 'clear socialist alternative' at the general election in May. 'I say to

Labour, stop being scared of your own shadow. Don't shrink what you offer the British people.'

And Sally Hunt, general secretary of the University and College Union, said: 'Britain needs more than a pay rise. We need real change.'

As people rolled up their banners, packed up their leaflets, and began to make their way home at the end of the afternoon, a mood of optimism was in the air – and in the conversation – as people headed for the bus, the Tube, the train or the pub.

'The next election will be the most important election in our lifetime,' said Tosh. 'It will determine whether we are stuck in a society which believes in capitalism, red in tooth and claw, the Devil take the hindmost, or we begin to build a better Britain in which each and every one of us in this country has a stake.'

## TRIUMPHS PAST, PEACE AT LAST

Davey Douglass, former branch secretary at Hatfield main, veteran NUM activist, and chronicler of the bitter miners' strike of 1984-85 was as chipper when stumps were drawn as he was when spotted at 9.30am unfurling an ASLEF banner from the back of a transit van on the forecourt at Charing Cross, having brought it down from Doncaster for Nick Whitehead and Tosh. 'What a day! And what a way to tell the government what we think – and what we want.'

Workers have been marching, and protesting, on the streets of London for centuries. Wat Tyler led a protest march from Kent and Essex against the poll tax and, initially, won concessions from Richard II at Smithfield in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

'I'm proud of every ASLEF member who turned up today to join us on the march,' said Simon. 'We made our point. And we can make another point in May.'



Les Muir, King's Cross RMS

'Austerity has gone far too far. They've cut to the backbone and it's time to stop. We are a rich country and this is the wrong way of doing things.'



Mark Daniels, Barking main line

'I'm here to show support to workers who are having their pay frozen and living with the indignity of using food banks and pay day loans while those at the top get a hefty pay rise and a nice new yacht.'



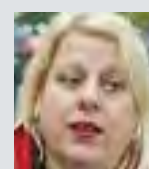
Andy Hudd, EC member District 7

'The government's brutal austerity programme doesn't affect the bankers, who caused the global financial crisis in the first place, it affects ordinary hard-working people. Why are we being asked to pay the price for their mistakes?'



Alan Moss, Longsight

'I'm here for my missus and my little one, for my family and my friends. We want a level playing field. We should be building a country for everyone, not just the few.'



Debbie Reay, Northern line north

'The austerity cuts imposed by George Osborne and Danny Alexander and the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition are ruining this country. We need a living wage for the people of this country. And we need a Labour government next year.'





Bill Dale and Dave Press at the National Pensioners' Convention (right) and ASLEF activists (above) in Trafalgar Square, London, after marching from Red Lion Square in support of the NHS



## Our chance to replace fear and despair with hope and opportunity



**BILL DALE of the Retired Members' Section, Chingford branch, reports from the National Pensioners' Convention in Blackpool**

**T**HE National Pensioners' Convention's traditional march from Blackpool tower to the Winter Gardens took place on 17 June before the official opening of the NPC parliament by Chris Ryan, deputy mayor of Blackpool. He offered delegates a warm welcome and praised the work of the NPC. This was followed by a rally chaired by NPC president Ron Douglas. There were a number of speakers for the rally, and the sessions for the parliament; we attended sessions on 'Dignity in Care'; 'Where Next for the NHS?' and 'Can we afford an ageing population?' All the speakers made a good contribution.

Neel Radia, chair of the National Association of Care Catering, explained how the Meals on Wheels service was set up in 1943 to provide good food to care centres and those living in their own homes; it also means that the lonely, elderly and disabled get a vital visit that

makes a real difference in their lives. Neel said one in four local authorities have, shamefully, axed this service because of cuts in public expenditure.

### **BLOOD SWEAT AND TEARS**

The government is spending less on social care, and taking money from the NHS will not improve services. The Care Act, which became law on 15 May, set out massive changes the like of which we haven't seen in this country since 1948. Those in need of care, said Sam Nickton of Age UK, may not get it, and it will be left to relatives, friends, and neighbours to step into the breach.

Belinda Turffrey, campaigns manager of 38 Degrees, a progressive political lobbying group, spoke out against the Gaggling Act 'that restricts democracy and campaigning.'

And Owen Jones, the journalist – he writes a column in *The Guardian* – author and activist, gave a very good

contribution covering Britain from 1926 to 2014, and the struggles won through blood, sweat and tears, and how we are witnessing the dismantling of all these by coalition government. He concluded: 'Let us not be downbeat nor fearful, but remember the courage from those before us. If we stand together and fight together we'll win this battle together.'

### **NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD**

Dot Gibson, general secretary of the NPC, which represents 1.5 million pensioners in this country, made another great contribution. She called for a basic state pension for all of £175 above the poverty level; pension increases to be linked to the best of RPI or CPI or 2.5%; universal pensioners' benefit to be maintained without means testing; NHS and care services to be free at the point of use, funded through taxation; and a legally binding dignity code to improve the quality and standards of care for older people.

Dr Louise Irvine talked about the campaign to save Lewisham hospital. 'Health and social care reorganisation in England means denationalisation. The Secretary of State's duty to provide a health service has been removed. Clinical commissioning groups are the biggest chapter in privatisation. Contracts worth £11 billion are out for tender and 70% now go to the private sector. Hospitals have had a 25% cut in their budgets, causing problems in A&E, and all

the other services. We must fight privatisation in the health service and we must fight to have the Social Care Act repealed.'

Steve Burke, director of the social enterprise United for All Ages, said ageism encourages attacks on older people as a diversion from the real problem of austerity. 'We have to tackle the myths about old – or young – people never having it so good – or so bad – at each other's expense. It's not a war between the generations, but about the distribution of income and wealth within the generations. And, yes, we can afford it – if we want to!'

### **HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY**

Steve Turner, assistant general secretary of Unite, talked about the history of the struggles, the fights and the battles won by the working-class in Britain. He spoke of Jack Jones and how his experience of poverty, homelessness, working-class struggle helped shape his union. He said lessons of the older generation are lessons for today! 'This is our chance – our opportunity to replace fear and despair with genuine hope and opportunity.'

The NCP parliament was a great success and now the talking and debating is over it is time to put the words into action, not just for the pensioners of this country, but also for our younger generation, because if we do not fight this together now, it might well be too late for us all for the future.



## Our union on the international stage



**MARK DANIELS**  
of Barking main  
line and **PETER**

### **JAMES** of Sheffield Midland report from the ITF congress in Sofia

**A**N ASLEF delegation – including general secretary Mick Whelan, national organiser Simon Weller, executive committee member Howard Kaye, Elizabeth Cocks of the Women's Representative Committee, Peter James of Sheffield Midland and Mark Daniels of Barking main line – boarded a British Airways flight for Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, in August. The reason for our three hour journey to this former Warsaw Pact country – and the newest member of the European Union – was to attend the 43rd congress of the International Transport Workers' Federation.

It was the biggest congress in the 118 year history of the ITF, and included 1,719 participants from 372 trade unions in 114 countries. Congress, held every four years, is the organisation's supreme decision making forum, at which affiliated unions set the agenda, and elect an executive board, president, vice-presidents and general secretary.

### VOICE OF PROGRESS

To get conference started we were introduced to our host nation's culture at the opening ceremony, and addressed by Bulgaria's prime minister and Sofia's mayor. ITUC president Sharon Burrow summed up the feeling in the hall when she said: 'We are the voice of opposition – but we are also the voice of progress.' A great speech from a great trade unionist. As the atmosphere became charged, so did the cultural entertainment, including a performance from a famous folk singer and the Bulgarian Eurovision contestant. In the evening delegates turned their attention to the opening reception, at the Natural History Museum, truly a fantastic venue and great entertainment whilst meeting other representatives from around the globe.

Congress was split into plenary sessions, for everyone, and section conferences. Delegates had the opportunity to tell stories of global struggle and solidarity; a particularly harrowing story we will remember was from a union member from Honduras who has been persecuted and pushed into exile to protect his family.

Simon Weller was the keynote speaker on Leading Change in Unions and highlighted eloquently what is being done in our own



ASLEF delegates on duty (left) and off (below) enjoyed the Alabama 3 (below left)



trade union. He was followed by female speakers from Argentina, Kenya, Australia and, finally, Dr Elaine Bernard from Harvard University, followed by questions from the floor from Togo, Kenya, Netherlands, Germany, Ukraine and the UK.

We attended a three hour fringe on rail privatisation hosted by the Korean Railway Union. After learning about their strike action, which lasted 23 days, and a discussion about the fight against the Fourth Railway Package, the debate moved on to building a network between rail unions with experience of privatisation. Simon and Elizabeth both made great contributions to the debate with intelligent questions and observations.

We also attended Violence Against Women and Elizabeth made a great contribution, asking the panel, chaired by Diana Holland from Unite, if they believe violence should not be perpetrated against anyone, irrespective of race, gender and sexual orientation. We were asked to pledge an oath to personally end violence against women; many delegates found this an unnecessary gimmick that demeaned a serious debate.

### ASLEF LANYARD

There were items on organising, not just for members but also unions to fight multinational companies like First Group and National Express. We heard from various countries, including Argentina, Germany, Nigeria, India, France, Russia, Ukraine, New Zealand, Tunisia, Japan, Botswana, South Korea, Venezuela, Turkey and many others. Special mention to the Turkish representative; we'd given him an ASLEF lanyard and he was wearing it when he made his speech!

At the women's conference, where issues ranged from action plans for the future of women in transport to violence against women to solidarity between women workers,

Elizabeth again made a great input.

Mark took a keen interest in the urban transport committee – which basically consisted of buses, privatisation of buses and the non-implementation of international framework agreements – as it covered many of the subjects he is researching for his dissertation at Ruskin College, Oxford.

Steve Cotton, who has been acting general secretary for the past two years, was elected GS of the ITF. He has been a good friend to ASLEF, was a guest speaker at our 2013 AAD in Edinburgh, and we wish him luck for the next four years.

### MILITARY BAND AND ALABAMA 3

After work it was time to unwind at the closing ceremony, held at the Sofia Military Academy, with a military band and the Alabama 3. Even though the songs were not all to trade unionist approval, it was a good end to a fantastic week, one in which I learned that even though cultures are different and unions from across the globe have different structures, we as workers face the same struggles against employers, governments, private capital and vested interests right around the world. It was great to see ASLEF having an influence on the global debate in the main conference hall and at the fringe meetings at which our national organiser spoke with authority and Elizabeth Cocks asked many searching questions.

But, beyond congress, the dynamics of the ASLEF delegation highlighted our union's strength and showed we are now a diverse union able to hold our own in the international trade union movement.

## Bread and butter of branch democracy



**Tony (left) gets his badge of honour from Mick**

Newton Heath welcomed the GS, Mick Whelan, to our branch with a splendid buffet provided by the Unicorn which hosts our meetings. Visits from full-time officers and EC members are a

two-way process. The branch heard from the GS on successes with staff travel, and current battles, including how we are taking the fight to Europe over threats to our final salary pension schemes. We are looking out, said Mick, taking and making our arguments to sister unions, the Labour Party, and the government.

In turn, the GS got to see a branch conducting its business, voting in six new members,

nominating a delegate to AAD and hearing comprehensive reports from local and company council reps – the bread and butter of branch accountability and democracy carried out up and down the country in our branches.

Mick also had the privilege of presenting a 40 year badge to a long serving, loyal and popular member, Tony Middleton, who in turn acknowledged how well ASLEF has served him. And, after 40 years, he surely knows best!

**Dave Vaughan, branch chair**

## Great job, Dave

Clacton branch were very pleased to have DO Nigel Gibson and EC member Howard Kaye as guests. They talked to us about pensions, Crossrail, TfL and upcoming changes to West Anglia, and Greater Anglia. They also made a presentation



**Dave picks up his tankard from Nigel**

to our branch secretary, Dave Rigby, who is retiring from the railway. Dave came to Clacton from Southern region; a very popular driver

and loyal ASLEF man, he has done a great job and we all wish him a long and enjoyable retirement.

**Russell Webb, branch chair**

## Running the railway



**Colin and the crew at Workington**

District Organiser Colin Smith presented Bro George Armstrong, who has served members as a local and health & safety rep, with a 40 year

badge for his loyal service to ASLEF and the branch gave him golf equipment. Colin explained how ASLEF has been busy at the TUC and Labour Party

conferences with the GS leading the way with our delegations. He mentioned how important it is to keep focused on the franchise issue with members' concerns about the Northern and TPE franchises reaching the end of their term.

Passengers are very satisfied with the East Coast service under the public umbrella, and ASLEF must be part of the process in achieving the right way to run the UK railway.

**David Hardie, branch secretary**

## Upcoming events

### ○ GATESHEAD & NEWCASTLE – 13 NOVEMBER

The annual ASLEF/NERSWA retirement reunion is at the Gateshead railway club, 15 Wellington Street, Gateshead, from 13.00. All members, past and present, are welcome and the GS Mick Whelan will be in attendance to unveil our new branch banner.

### ○ HITHER GREEN – FRIDAY 14 NOVEMBER

Our annual reunion will be held at Hither Green railway club, Beacon Road, London, SE13, commencing at 19.00. Everyone connected with the depot, past and present, is welcome.

## On the ball

The GS was a most welcome guest at Chingford. Mick reported on general affairs in the industry, as well as ASLEF, and one of the points Mick made was the need for members to be on the ball politically in the build up to the general election in 2015 to get the right result for working people in this country. Mick presented awards to branch chair Bill Rogers (25 years) and Steve Jestico (40). We'd like to thank Mick for attending what was a special event, particularly for me becoming, officially, an Old Git!

**Steve Jestico, secretary**



**Mick Whelan presents long service awards to Bill (above) and Steve (below)**



A busy branch meeting heard from three guest speakers, GS Mick Whelan, District 7 Organiser Brian Corbett, and recently elected EC member Andy Hudd. Mick presented service badges to drivers Nigel Green (above left, 10 years), Steve Stoddart (above right, 40) and Phil Smith right, 15).

**Patrick Houghton, assistant secretary**



**TALK THE WALK:** A good turnout for the October branch saw a healthy debate about the walking routes used by drivers from XC, GA and GTR between the station and carriage sidings at Cambridge. All three h&s reps were successfully re-elected as ASLEF candidates to their respective depots. Matters on XC saw Dave Sullivan nominated to represent Cambridge for a further term, and donations were made to the Peter Bacon appeal and the Buckinghamshire fire brigade dispute. Our next meeting is our AGM on Monday 1 December when our guest will be DO Nigel Gibson.

**Martin Haylett, secretary**



## Special night

Fifty-three members of Feltham Electric gathered at the Feltham railway club to see three of our members receive their ASLEF badges for service to our society. We were joined for this special occasion by our company council, DO Graham Morris, and GS Mick Whelan. Bro J Ajjane got his 15 year badge, Bro S Rutter his 40 year badge, and Bro F Green his 50 year



**Clockwise: Jamal, Steve and Fred pick up their badges from Mick and Graham**

medallion. Fred and his wife Sooty have a special place in the hearts of all of us at Feltham; the standing ovation he received was

justly deserved. A special night we will all remember for a very long time.

**Istvan Kihuth, branch secretary**

## Senior service

At the October meeting of Stratford branch, we had two special guest speakers: District Organiser

Nigel Gibson and Howard Kaye, EC member, district 5. Nigel spoke about what is happening in



Mick Whelan presented Bro Bob Jones (and his wife Dilys) with a certificate to thank him for his tremendous service to ASLEF and its members as a long standing local rep and one of the longest serving secretaries of Birkenhead branch. Bob started his railway service as an engine cleaner in 1965 and rose through the ranks, working closely with EC members and DOs as well as giving 100% to members at his branch and depot.

**Colin Smith, District 3 Organiser**

the freight and passenger sectors, including a 'close to home' outline of the split between Greater Anglia and the new Crossrail franchise with regards to pensions. Howard spoke of the 'never far away' subject of the industry wishing to pursue in-cab CCTV and the strong opposition to this of ASLEF. Howard has been selected as the Labour Party candidate to contest the 2015 election in his home constituency of South West Surrey. We all wish him the best of luck! Nigel and Howard handed out long service badges to I Bransgrove, P Ives, J Wall (10 years); S Turrell, J Winning (15); D Hebb, M White (35);



**Howard and Nigel with Brothers Bransgrove and White**

A Humphreys, and B Moore (40). Howard pointed out that, since privatisation and the movement of drivers between employers, the ASLEF membership badge is really the only way of acknowledging members' railway service, as TOCs and FOCs do not recognise loyalty and length of service when transferring between companies.

**John Thorpe, branch reporter**



## Mick Holder looks back to November 1914 and a world at war

### ELECTRICITY AND STEAM

Basingstoke branch reported: 'Our delegate attended a meeting in London re electricity superseding steam, and he reported a settlement with the company to the effect that the locomotive department is to have all jobs on the front end of trains as long as there are drivers or firemen and cleaners to feed them. It is an example of what organisation and combination can do.'

On the Great War they said: 'Brother Warwick was booked to give us a treat, but owing to all men being on duty, a result of our being at war, his visit was postponed. We cannot afford to stand still, but should in time of war prepare for peace, which we all hope may soon come.'

### AFFILIATE TO LABOUR PARTY

Nine Elms reported: 'The branch decided to affiliate to the newly-formed Labour Party, whose chief object is to capture seats for Labour on the London County Council. Some of our members, we are aware, are averse to politics in the branch room, and we endeavour to curtail them as much as possible, but the political question is inseparably connected with trade unionism, and without adopting an autocratic attitude, it is impossible to eliminate correspondence from Labour secretaries. In every case branch business is disposed of first, and members who then wish to leave can do so. Capital and Labour have for the time being declared a truce, but the workers' war is bound to recur after the colossal struggle for supremacy now raging, and men have finished killing and maiming each other. The constant movement of troops keeps our members working at high pressure, especially on Sundays.'

### THE DUTY FOR OLD ENGLAND

Ince branch reported: 'After the branch business had been dealt with and two new members enrolled, the letter from the general office re our members serving in the army was discussed and we shall be pleased to hear these men made free members until their return. We are prepared to pay the contributions of our brothers who are away doing the duty for old England. We do not think the levy suggested by Mr Parfitt is needed.'

**The 73D temperance society (Gillingham retired members) enjoyed a day out on the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway making sure tea, coffee and water was available for the ladies. The RHDR pulled out all the stops to ensure we had a great day; many thanks to them and the 73D organisers. Peter Smith, RMS**



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## FREEDOM RIDERS

Show your support for the **Freedom Riders** in South Yorkshire who are demanding that Northern Rail stops persecuting pensioners and the disabled (and wasting £5,000 a day on heavy-handed security whose bully boy behaviour has been condemned as 'disgraceful and outrageous').

The **Freedom Ride t-shirt** is available in L/XL/XXL and costs just £5 (plus £2.80 p+p). Payment by cheque or postal order payable to Barnsley Retirees Action Group at 7 Church St, Jump, Barnsley, S74 0HZ. Or call George on 07985 028003 or email [travelpass2014@gmail.com](mailto:travelpass2014@gmail.com)



## TONY BENN A Celebration



### Main Concert 7.30pm £20\*

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Roy Bailey  
Karen Matheson  
Donald Shaw  
Arthur Johnstone  
Alastair McDonald  
Musical Director - Rab Noakes

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Tom Leonard  
Elvis McGonagall  
Liz Lochhead?  
Juliet Cadzow

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Glasgow Royal Concert Hall 30 November 2014

\*Joint Ticket £25





## BOB HODSON KINGPIN WHO LOVED THE FOOTPLATE

The shock wave that reverberated around the railway family on Sunday 21 September was cataclysmic. From Inverness to Penzance, those who knew Bob Hodson were stunned into uncharacteristic silence. For once, we did not have the words to portray our thoughts because Bob epitomised the union in everything he did, at work and in retirement. He was our kingpin and kept us all together.

Bob was a man of principle who never sought political or higher office in ASLEF although he was more than qualified. He was never afraid to say 'no' when those around him were wrongly saying 'yes' but would also see the other side of an argument and change his view when convinced. Bob loved the footplate and that shone through in his desire to fight for improvements and protection for us all.

There are people in positions of authority on the railway who expect respect, and some who demand it. Very few earn it. Bob did; although he didn't seem to realise what a monumental man he was. As someone said at his retirement, 'Bob was the general secretary we never had.' His friendship was precious and to say he will be missed is an enormous understatement.

He followed his father, who was also a driver, onto the railway, moving from Stourbridge to Cricklewood where he served on the LDC and, after depot closure, moved to Saltley in 1983. He transferred to Wolverhampton in 1990 and served on the LDC from 1993 until 2003. Then he became our company council rep, a position he held with great pride until he took early retirement in 2011 at the age of 62.

Bob had many family holidays at Calafell in



Spain, sometimes low key, sometimes it seemed like half the depot was there. Newbies were taken under his wing and showed where local supermarkets were, the best places to eat and, most important, how to order a large beer in Spanish.

They came from all corners of the country to mourn, and then celebrate, the passing of one of the true giants of the footplate, and of ASLEF. The church was full 45 minutes before the service which was relayed to those outside on speakers. When Bob's coffin was brought outside those waiting broke into rapturous applause; something none of us had witnessed at a funeral before. Johnny Price organised a minute's silence at 14.00 when the train he was driving, bearing a wreath for Bob,



The 10.40 from Kidderminster (top), hauled by a diesel driven by Bob's pal Johnny Price, carried a wreath for Bob pictured (centre) at the Cricklewood reunion on the Great Central Railway, (above left) with Mick Richards and (above) with Bill Goode

was at Bewdley. All locos shut down and SVR staff took off their caps and placed them across their chests as a mark of respect.

Dean, Ross and Poppy would like to thank everyone from the bottom of their hearts for the many tributes and kind words of condolence that they have received. It has helped them to get through a tough time. They take great comfort in knowing just how many lives Bob touched, how much the big guy meant to everyone, and how much he will be missed.

**Wolverhampton branch**

## RONNIE BRADY MAN OF THE LAKE

Ronnie Brady has died after a short illness at the age of 80. He was born a railwayman in Salford; as a wartime evacuee he moved to Barrow, starting work as a coal man at the steam shed. He began work on the footplate in 1950, on loan to Coniston shed above the lake, until the branch line closures brought him back to Salford and Patricroft shed, Newton Heath and Manchester Victoria. His love of the railway, especially the shed by the lake, never left him.

**Sam Black, Newton Heath RMS**

## BRIAN HICKEY GREAT STEAM CHARACTER

It is with deep regret that I have to inform you of the passing of retired Chester & Ellesmere Port driver Brian Hickey, as one of Chester and the Port great steam characters Brian loved the railway, loved the footplate and loved steam, he was also a very keen railway photographer and always had his camera with him on the footplate to capture the environment he worked in along with the characters he shared the footplate with. A good turnout at Chester crematorium was present to send Brian on his final diagram to that great steam shed in the sky. Also retired Chester and Birkenhead Mollington Street driver **BILL BRAILLEY** passed away on the same day as Brian's funeral, both will be missed by family and work colleagues.

**Steve Bie, ex-Chester driver & branch chair**



Brian (left) with Bill Smith

## LAST JOURNEYS

Portsmouth & Isle of Wight branch has to report the sad passing away of two ex-drivers. **SUE RICKETTS** moved from driving in the London area to become the first female driver on the Isle of Wight.

**RON HESLOP** retired from driving at Fratton but maintained contact with train crew through his involvement in supplying drinks to the Fratton mess. Both will be greatly missed.

**John Glazebrook, Portsmouth & IOW**



We welcome letters, either by email to [journal@aslef.org.uk](mailto:journal@aslef.org.uk) or by Royal Mail to **ASLEF Journal at 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN**. Each month the writer of our **star letter** wins a rich range of ASLEF regalia.



## God and fanaticism

The Middle East is in flames again, not only the Israeli bombardment of Gaza and the civil war in Syria, but now the rise of Islamic State who seem hell bent on killing anyone who is not, or will not, convert to Islam. If one were to study history, one would have to ask how can anyone stop this slaughter? In my opinion the causes lie in religion, men in suits and the West insisting on Western democracy.

The world has suffered from those who believe their God is better than your God. The Crusaders killed tens of thousands of innocent Islamic men, women and children when they sacked cities in the name of Christianity. Millions were killed by the Inquisition in Western Europe, not only the Jews and Moors in Spain, but anyone who did not accept the Pope's particular idea of Christianity. Then came the Reformation that turned Catholic against Protestant which is still going on in parts of the UK.

After the Great War the men in suits sat down with their pens and rulers and created new countries from scratch. Just look at the map of the Middle East, straight lines dividing Mesopotamia into Iraq and Kuwait. With the Ottoman empire defeated new borders were created between Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Iraq with no regard to culture or the Kurdish people, who had no country of their own and were spread between Turkey and Iraq. Further damage was done after the Second World War with the creation of Israel. The Jews may have deserved their own country but no consideration was given to the Palestinian people who were living in what was then their homeland, Palestine.

When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in the 1980s, the West, mainly the USA, fought a proxy war by arming and training the Taliban, one of whose leaders was Osama bin Laden. We know where that led and the terrible price we paid. The Iraq War was fought on a lie, with no exit plan or idea of how to fill the power vacuum other than with Westernised democratic elections, which the victorious winner has deemed as his right to impose his Shia government to the exclusion of the Sunnis and any other ethnic group. A reverse mirror image of the regime of Saddam Hussein.

I'm an atheist, but I believe that freedom of worship, of free speech, and a free press are the signs of a civilised society. How can

## FOR VALOUR – LEST WE FORGET THEIR SACRIFICE THIS MONTH

**History is my passion and, over the last couple of months, I have found out some facts concerning railwaymen and the Great War. More than 35,000 railwaymen died during the struggle, at least six won the Victoria Cross, one of whom was a driver. I think the two Patriot classes were named after them; the engines were 45536 Private W Wood and 45537 Private E Sykes. Also, the Great Central built an engine in 1920 and called it Valour (from the words 'for valour' on the Victoria Cross) to commemorate their fallen railwaymen.**

**It was the railway which put into**

**place war memorials at very many stations. But the reason I am writing to the *Journal* is because, on 14 May 1919, at Westminster Abbey, British Rail held the very first service for fallen comrades long before any other organisation thought to do so. So, although it is four and a half years away, it would be wonderful if we could start the process, or do it ourselves (the railway unions) and hold a service on 14 May 2019.**

**Hugh Connolly, Gallowgate, Glasgow (part of the PJ Smith battalion)**

anyone, whatever deity they believe in, think such a deity would condone the horror the world is facing now through religious fanaticism?

**Len Worboys, RMS**

## Writing on the wall

**The writing is on the wall for the monied elite, the capitalist class, or whatever else you choose to call them, whose collective greed resulted in the financial collapse of 2008. We in Europe and the United States know their idea of freedom. It's the freedom to work longer for less, the freedom to lose social services, the freedom to have poorer citizens resort to food banks and soup kitchens. It's the freedom to have your human rights taken away. The freedom to be denied freedom.**

**They are losing their grip, they are on the run, but they won't give up. They'll continue to try and maintain their greedy, selfish and aggressive attitude and this brings me to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, already mentioned in the *Journal* but of such importance it must be kept in the forefront. So totally against the best interests of everyone except the capitalist class that it has been kept secret, discussed behind closed doors, with very little press coverage. If the TTIP is stopped, not altered or watered down, but killed dead, we will have dealt them a serious**

**blow. And I have never known any ASLEF driver just lay down and give in!**

**There's talk of the trade unions possibly forming a new political party to oppose Labour, the Conservatives, and the Liberal Democrats. Not a party to be threatened and bullied into compromise but a party to force change. A real party for the people. Because when people are well-led, well-informed and well-motivated, history shows they will triumph. Bring the subject up at the branch.**

**Chris Dodd, RMS**

## Thanks for the support

I write to thank the branches and activists in District 7 – particularly the 466 members who voted for me in the DO election and the 433 members who voted for me in the EC election – for their support in the recent elections for district organiser and executive committee member. Under the circumstances, to lose by such small margins (by 31 for DO and by just three for the EC) on a second ballot represents a moral victory. I wish to thank Andy Hudd for conducting a clean EC election campaign.

The campaigns highlighted a number of issues that need to be addressed in the district such as Great Western harmonisation, job security in DB Schenker and relatively low pay in Arriva Trains Wales. An afterthought, and consequence of these elections, is that for the first time since I have been a member of this



union (30 years), and perhaps ever, out of the ten full-time officers and eight EC members no one from Wales is now in the ASLEF leadership.  
**Bryan Davies, Newport branch**

## Safety seminar

I had great pleasure in attending my first District 3 safety seminar held in Liverpool in September. Well done to DO Colin Smith and h&s rep Alan Moss for organising such an event. I believe this is the only district that holds this yearly get together, and I certainly recommend other districts to try and arrange something similar. A good turnout of reps from various TOCs and FOCs sharing information, and as well as this we had the good fortune to have various speakers including, the ASLEF GS, Alice Monk from the RSSB and Hilda Palmer from the Manchester Hazards Centre. Very educational and interesting.  
**Farooq Rashid, safety rep, Kingmoor yard, Carlisle**

## Two for tee

Northern Rail and the Passenger Transport Executive have tried to demoralise us by claiming that nothing can change; attacking us at Sheffield station; offering a meeting and then making no attempt to negotiate. But, in spite of all their efforts, we carry on protesting. After our ad for Freedom Riders tee-shirts appeared in the September edition of the ASLEF *Journal* a train driver from Hemsworth came to my house, bought two and made a donation to our campaign. It's nice to know we are not on our own!  
**George Arthur, Barnsley**

## In solidarity

On behalf of our members in the Irish rail sector, and our national executive council, I wish to convey our thanks and appreciation for your note of solidarity during our recent dispute which has since been resolved. The gesture was very much appreciated.  
**Joe O'Flynn, general secretary, SIPTU**

## Overtime on Underground

Congratulations again to Steve Grant, ex-DO for District 8 (*Journal*, October) for again eloquently attempting to answer Bro Hardesty (*Journal*, September and previous) on questions about this issue. What Steve did not repeat, however, was his previous conjecture that if Bro Hardesty had such support amongst his colleagues he and his support should attend their branch meetings and raise motions to be voted on to go to AAD.

As to Bro Power's response (*Journal*, October), as a health and safety rep, concerned about fatigue, the work/life balance and safety issues, I find it offensive. If you have evidence your reps are behaving thus, again,

attend your branch meetings and vote for someone who does not when they are up for election, or stand yourself. And, as you have such concern for struggling workers in these hard times, no doubt you joined the Britain Needs a Pay Rise march on 18 October.

**Karen Tily, Central Line**

## Stars and the union

Bill Davis's article on the 1965 manning agreement in October's *Journal* brought back many memories of my time at Polmadie depot when I was one of the starred firemen. At the time we did not realise how significant this agreement would be. Not only were earnings protected but a lot of jobs were saved and a lot of good men went on to play their part in the modernisation of a railway that had been

starved of investment for decades. I join with Bill Davies in his comments that, without this agreement, we would never have had the opportunity to have remained in this industry that gave us so much pleasure and the many comrades we worked with.

ASLEF always has and always will be at the forefront of fighting for your future.  
**John Ormiston, former Sectional Council B secretary**

## Tony Movember

What a lovely photograph in *Grey Power* of the RMS committee. Tony West has more hair on his upper lip than I have on my head, but I ain't complaining at 94 and having been retired for 30 years.

**Reg Pearce, RMS**

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**COWDEN CRASH** commemorative badges, price £5, to mark the 20th anniversary of the accident in which two members of Norwood Junction train crew, a Selhurst conductor and a member of the public tragically lost their lives. Contact Mick Green at [userg4163@aol.com](mailto:userg4163@aol.com) if you are ex-Norwood train crew.



**BLAND ENCOUNTER** by Donald Wightman is a comedy novel about risqué encounters on the railways. A donation from the sale of each book will be made to the Royal British Legion and Help for Heroes. Paperback £7.99 ebook £3.95 from [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)



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# Just like Eddie



**MICHAEL HERBERT,**  
adult education  
tutor, union  
activist, and  
trustee of the Working  
Class Movement Library,  
lifts the lid on Eddie and  
Ruth Frow and the WCML

**T**HE Working Class Movement Library is a national collection of the history of the labour movement in Britain, founded in the mid-1950s by Ruth and Edmund Frow, whose personal and political partnership lasted for more than 40 years and led to the creation of this unique and wonderful archive.

Eddie Frow was born at Harrington in Lincolnshire in 1906. After leaving school he became a toolmaker and trade unionist in the engineering industry. In 1924, after reading Lenin's book *The State and Revolution*, he joined the Communist Party. During the Great Depression he was active in the unemployed workers' movement and served four months in Strangeways prison, and was badly beaten up by police in the Battle of Bexley Square, after leading a march to Salford town hall. On release, he became a shop steward and then full-time organiser with the Amalgamated Engineering Union until he retired in 1971.

## SUMMER SCHOOL

Ruth Engel was born in 1922, grew up in Mill Hill, north London, served in the WAAF during the war, going into teaching afterwards. She joined the Communist Party in 1945, and in the 1950s and '60s was active in the peace movement, as well as the National Union of Teachers. Ruth finished her teaching career in 1980 as deputy head of a large comprehensive school in Manchester.

Ruth and Eddie met at a Communist Party summer school in Sussex in 1953 and soon merged their lives – and their respective book collections. They began collecting material on the history of the trade union, radical and labour movement, travelling the country in their holidays to pick up material. In 1976 they recounted their experiences in an article for the journal *History Workshop*:

'Our first journeys were in a 1937 Morris van. We carried a small tent into which we



**The Working Class Movement Library in Manchester and some of its many exhibits**

crawled wherever we found a grass verge or field conveniently near a town where a bookseller traded. We formed then the pattern which we have followed in the main for over 20 years. In the morning when we are fresh and full of energy we comb the shelves of the unsuspecting bookseller. In the afternoon we laze in the summer sun reading and gloating over our morning purchases. In the evening we walk and possibly move on to the next wide open bookshop. When our money is gone or the van is full, we return to Manchester.'

## TREASURE TROVE

The result of these journeys around the bookshops of England was that their house in Old Trafford became a treasure trove, with bookshelves in every room as well as banners, emblems, prints, and much else, all meticulously catalogued by Ruth and Eddie. They also began writing books, pamphlets, and articles and were in great demand as lecturers, as well as being active in the Society for the Study of Labour History. News of their library spread and many researchers made their way to Old Trafford, their studies fuelled by regular cups of coffee and Ruth's delicious home-made buns.

By 1987 the house was full to overflowing. Fortunately, at this point, Salford city council offered to provide a new home for the library, together with full-time library staff, and later that year the entire collection moved to Jubilee House, a former nurses' home opened in 1901, on the Crescent opposite Salford University. In the years since the collection has continued to grow and rarely a week goes by without some new material being donated. Often a donor will arrive unannounced with a

bag full of wonderful archive material that may have been in a family for several generations.

Eddie died in 1997, just short of his 91st birthday. Veteran Stakhanovite communist to her fingertips, Ruth carried on their work, visiting the library, neatly dressed and carrying a small case with everything she needed to do for the day. Visitors were often amazed – and on occasions awed – to be personally taken on a tour by Ruth, who would then make tea and happily chat about labour movement history.

## MAXINE PEAKE A TRUSTEE

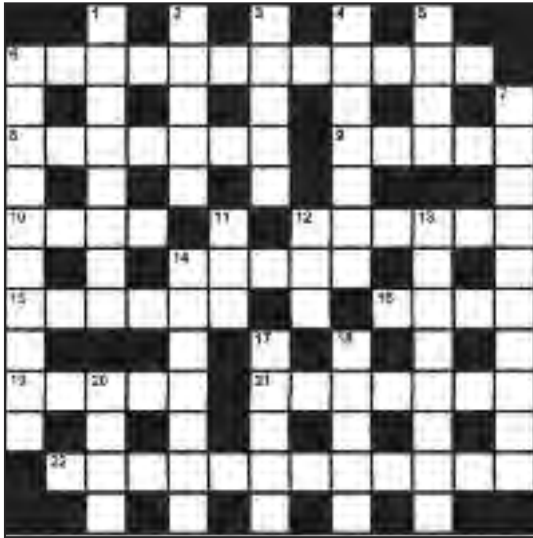
Ruth died in 2008, just hours after attending a library committee. There was no funeral as she had donated her body to science but hundreds attended a commemoration with songs and poetry in her honour.

The library left by Ruth and Eddie is now recognized as one of the most important labour and working-class history collections in the country. It begins in the 1770s and goes up to the present day. It is open to all and welcomes visitors and researchers. After losing much of its grant from Salford council it is kept going by donations from the trade union movement and individuals. Maxine Peake, the actress, is one of the trustees, as is Lyn Collins, secretary of the North West TUC. The WCML has a number of items about ASLEF, as well as many other items on the railways in general, and we would be happy to see any ASLEF member who comes to visit.

● The Working Class Movement Library is at Jubilee House, 51 Crescent, Salford, M5 4WX. Telephone 0161 736 3601. Visit their website at [www.wcml.org.uk](http://www.wcml.org.uk) or email [enquiries@wcml.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@wcml.org.uk)



## Prize Crossword number 103 by Zebedee



Solution to prize crossword number 102 which appeared in the October edition of the *ASLEF Journal*

**Across:** 1 Spicy 4 Smack 10 Aroma 11 Bloomer  
12 Spotless 13 Iota 15 Misfit 17 Goatee 19 Lime  
20 Brouhaha 23 Obvious 24 Apron 25 Crypt 26 Regal  
**Down:** 2 Photo 3 Chaplain 5 Moon 6 Compost  
7 Marshmallow 8 Abuse 9 Greasepaint 14 Populate  
16 Samovar 18 Gross 21 Aorta 22 Pomp

Congratulations to **André Bemand** of **Birkdale, Southport, Merseyside** who was last month's winner.

**Across**

6 Unscrupulous (12)  
8 Laugh slyly (7)  
9 Push gently (5)  
10 Male voice (4)  
12 Spanish dance (6)  
14 Bode (5)  
15 Straightforward (6)  
16 Not tame (4)  
19 Hospital worker (5)  
21 Type of fabric (7)  
22 On the other hand (12)

**Down**

1 Sliver (8)  
2 Star sign (5)  
3 Derision (5)  
4 Guarantor (7)  
5 Sell (4)  
6 Of good character (10)  
7 Mediocre (6, 4)  
11 Intestine (3)  
12 Vehicle (3)  
13 Widespread disease (8)  
14 Takes (7)

17 Homeless dog (5)  
18 Attach (5)  
20 Tumult (4)



MARKS & SPENCER

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

Name.....

Address.....

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.....Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 102nd ASLEF crossword in the October edition. If you successfully complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, *ASLEF Journal*, 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 November

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